Digital Donation Platform for Nonprofit and Charity Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Social economy has assumed a role of growing importance in these last decades, being seen by several entities and political agents as one of the pillars in a new sustainable economic model. Volunteer programs are multiplying, and greater coordination between the various involved actors is essential to guarantee that society’s help reaches the people who need them. In this sense, a digital donation platform based exclusively on open source technologies has been proposed and developed, which simplifies the process of donation of goods to a set of causes created by social solidarity institutions. The application permits anonymous donations and allows the monitoring of the status of each donation by the donors. Additionally, usability was considered as a key element in the design of the application

KEYWORDS

Donations, Social Economy, Volunteering, Web Development, Web Interfaces

1. INTRODUCTION

The social economy is an economic and social force that opens the doors to another way of producing and consuming, respectful of people and the environment. It constitutes a heterogeneous socioeconomic space, formed by a set of socio-economic activities, freely carried out by several entities with different organic realities, in their form, size and logic of operation.

In this institutional domain, there are cooperatives, mutual societies, mercies, associations, foundations and community entities, which have as common denominator organizations of persons that pursue the general interest or socially relevant interests of their members or beneficiaries in a sustainable way, and without the purpose of remunerating capitalist investors. Its specificity lies not in the object of the activity, because the social economy is present in almost all economic activities, from agriculture to services, but in ends, the processes, mode of organization, government and functioning, values and principles which guide their activities are common among them.

The social economy proves it is conceivable to combine profitability with solidarity, to create stable and dignified jobs, to strengthen social, economic and regional cohesion, to generate human and social capital, to promote active citizenship, to promote social, environmental and technological sustainability and innovation. The social economy is important in itself, but also because of the beneficial effects it generates. It is relevant to emphasize that the place of the social economy depends on its own actors, but also, to a large extent, on the vision and attitude of the political power and, consequently, on the public policies that are directed to it.

The weight of the social economy is growing throughout the European Union (EU). According to European Commission (2017), there are 2 million of social economy enterprises in Europe, representing 10% of all businesses in the EU. In Portugal, the social economy is also of significant

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importance, contributing approximately 4% to the national GDP. More than 260 thousand workers are dedicated to activities related to the social economy with more than 55 thousand entities involved (Ramos, 2016; Tiago, 2017).

This study is motivated by the dramatic events that occurred in the summer of 2017 in Portugal, in which fires caused more than 100 deaths (ABC, 2017). In accordance to this emergence scenario, a set of solidarity initiatives at national and international level appeared, but they showed several difficulties in the coordination of the goods needed by the populations. In this sense, we propose the development of a digital donation platform that can help nonprofit and charity organizations in the process of identifying and collecting the necessary goods needed by populations. The digital application allows solidarity institutions to register and show their humanitarian and social causes. Users will be able to support these causes with the necessary assets identified by those organizations, according to the needs of each cause. The paper is organized as follows: we initially perform a brief contextualization of the project framework describing the growing importance that the Internet has had in the process of incentive and management of the donations. Next, we present the methodology of work, in which we present the requirements and architecture of the system and also the research questions. After that, we discuss the main results of the project considering each of the research questions identified in the previous point. Finally, we present the conclusions of our work.

2. BACKGROUND

Technology can play a relevant role in the context of the nonprofit sector. According to Boles (2013), technological innovations can contribute to the increase of efficiency and effectiveness of these organizations, emphasizing the role of cloud computing systems, social media, and mobile technologies. Hackler and Saxton (2007) consider that IT can contribute in the areas of financial sustainability, strategic communications, relationship building and partnerships. Mirza (2010) presents a study that intends to understand the critical success factors in the development of an information system for a charitable organization. This study emphasizes that the process of requirements analysis is fundamental since the budget of these institutions is typically very small and the proactive role that must be assumed by the promoters of these institutions in supporting the project.

Donations can take several types. Leskovec (2010) presents three typologies: (i) voluntary payments; (ii) monetary donations; and (iii) donation of goods. In the case of voluntary payments, the initiative of this action is carried out by the donor, while in monetary or property donations there is a contextualization of the cause to which the donation is destined. In any of these situations, Leskovec (2010) emphasizes the role that online environments can play in this process, namely in strengthening the relationship between charitable institutions and donors.

The role of the Internet for the charitable fundraising is addressed by several authors. Days (2009) and Hagenbuch (2007) discuss how the Internet has transformed the way that nonprofit organizations raising funds. Treiblmaier and Pollach (2008) characterize the driver and inhibitors of online donations reaching the conclusion that fourth characteristic influences general attitude towards online donations, respectively: (i) pertinence and urgency of the cause; (ii) credibility of the organization; (iii) trust in the Internet; and (iv) perception about privacy. In this sense, studies have emerged that address the performance of online fundraising and the role that marketing plays in this process (Sargeant et al., 2007; Bennett, 2009; Caciya, 2016). Another factor, highlighted by Tatham and Christopher (2014), is the role that logistics play in the Internet donation process, particularly when it comes to donating goods.

The growth of the strategic importance of social media and the increasing number of its users has also raised the motivation to observe this phenomenon in the third sector. Nah and Saxton (2013) seek to understand the process of adoption and use of social media by nonprofit organizations. The perspective of analyzing the use of the main social networks, as Twitter and Facebook took into account three dimensions: (i) adoption; (ii) frequency of use; (iii) and dialogue. Some organizations
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